

Message Text

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AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO POUCH

AMCONSUL MATAMOROS POUCH

AMCONSUL MAZATLAN POUCH

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AMCONSUL NUEVO LAREDO POUCH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MEXICO 9325

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MX PFOR PINT EGEN

SUBJ: MONTHLY POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS - OCTOBER 1974

1. PRESIDENTS MEET AT BORDER

A. A WHIRLWIND ENCOUNTER BETWEEN PRESIDENTS FORD AND ECHEVERRIA ALONG THE ARIZONA-SONORA BORDER OCTOBER 21 CLIMAXED TWO WEEKS OF FRANTIC PREPARATIONS AND PHENOMENAL FACE-LIFTING IN THE SONORAN TOWNS OF NOGALES AND MAGDALENA DE KINO. ALTHOUGH BRIEF, IT WAS PRESIDENT FORD'S FIRST STATE VISIT ABROAD, AND THE GOM WORKED
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FEVERISHLY (AND SPENT LAVISHLY) TO EXPLOIT THIS HONOR AND TO MAKE

IT A COLORFUL MEDIA EVENT.

B. FROM THE PR PERSPECTIVE, THE VISIT WAS AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS: FRIENDLY MOBS SWAMPED PRESIDENT FORD AND HIS PARTY AT NOGALES, WHERE WELCOME CEREMONIES WERE HELD, AND NEARLY IMMOBILIZED THEM AT MAGDALENA, 85 KMS TO THE SOUTH (BURIAL PLACE OF FR. EUSEBIO KINO, A JESUIT MISSIONARY WHO EXPLORED THE BORDER REGION ON FOOT DURING THE 16TH CENTURY AND WHOSE MEMORY PROVIDED A UNIFYING THEME FOR THE VISIT). SHIRTSLEEVES DIPLOMACY AND HEARTY COMARADERIE BETWEEN EQUALS WAS THE IMPRESSION SOUGHT BY THE GOM, AND IT WAS SUCCESSFULLY CAUGHT AS THE PRESIDENTS REMOVED THEIR JACKETS AND MARCHED ARM IN ARM THROUGH THE WILDLY DELIGHTED THRONGS.

C. THE ENCOUNTER WAS BY NO MEANS LIMITED TO PUBLIC SPECTACLE, HOWEVER. LENGTHY CONVERSATIONS WERE HELD BETWEEN THE TWO PRESIDENTS AND THEIR SENIOR ADVISORS AT MAGDALENA'S PALACIO MUNICIPAL (IMPRESSIVELY RESTORED AND UNBELIEVABLY BEAUTIFIED FOR THE OCCASION IN LESS THAN TEN DAYS) AND WERE RESUMED LATER IN THE DAY AT TUBAC, ARIZ., THEIR PRINCIPAL STOP ON THE U.S. SIDE OF THE BORDER. KEY ITEMS DISCUSSED (EMBASSY HAS NOT YET RECEIVED DEPARTMENT'S MEMCONS ON MEETING) INCLUDED, WE UNDERSTAND:

- MEXICO'S NEWLY-FOUND OIL RESERVES;

- MEXICO'S PROPOSED CHARTER OF ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND DUTIES (SEE BELOW);

- INFLATION;

- ILLEGAL MEXICAN IMMIGRANT WORKERS (UNEXPECTEDLY, MEXICO ABANDONED ITS APPEAL FOR A NEW BRACERO AGREEMENT BUT INSISTED ON JUST AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF ITS NATIONALS, WHETHER LEGAL OR ILLEGAL; THE U.S. AGREED TO REACTIVATE STUDY COMMISSIONS TO PROBE THE PROBLEM FURTHER); AND

- CUBA.

D. TWO UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS OCCURED: (A) THE STARTLING TURN-AROUND BY PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA ON THE BRACERO QUESTION, WHICH CONFIDENTIAL

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LEFT THE MEXICAN PUBLIC PERPLEXED AND NEWS COMMENTATORS SCRAMBLING --SO FAR WITH LITTLE SUCCESS--TO COME UP WITH A NEW RATIONAL; AND (B) SOME DIFFERENCE IN UNDERSTANDING AS TO U.S. POSITION ON ECHEVERRIA CHARTER.

E. FOLLOWING MILITARY HONORS AND FAREWELLS AT DAVIS-MONTHAN AIR BASE AT TUCSON, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA, WHO HAD ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO RETURN BY AIR TO MEXICO CITY, LEFT THE AIRFIELD BY BUS

INSTEAD AND MOTORED BACK TO THE BORDER, WHERE HE PLUNGED AGAIN INTO LOCAL POLITICS AMONG BUSINESS GROUPS DISGRUNTLED OVER RECENT SALARY INCREASES AND OVER GOVERNMENT PLANS TO INCREASE TAXES AND REDUCE DUTY-FREE PRIVILEGES ALONG THE BORDER.

2. CHARTER OF ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF STATES (CERDS)

AS ANTICIPATED, THE STATUS AND PROSPECTS OF THE CERDS, A BRAIN-CHILD OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA WHICH HAS WON UNDERSTANDABLE WIDESPREAD SUPPORT AMONG LDC'S AND NOW SEEMS LIKELY TO COME TO A VOTE IN THE UNGA DURING NOVEMBER, WAS DISCUSSED DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL MEETING OF OCTOBER 21. THE USG POSITION WAS EXPLAINED TO PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA. AFTER THE MEETING, THE MEXICAN (AND SOME ELEMENTS OF US) PRESS INTERPRETED PRESIDENT FORD'S EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AND SYMPATHY FOR THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES EMBODIED IN THE CHARTER AS A "TURNAROUND" IN THE US POSITION. (THIS DESPITE COMMENTS BY PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA ON OCTOBER 21 AND FOREIGN SECRETARY RABASA SUBSEQUENTLY THAT SERIOUS DIFFERENCES ON THE CHARTER REMAINED TO BE WORKED OUT). UNFORTUNATELY, COMMENTS BY PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA UPON HIS RETURN TO MEXICO CITY SEEMED TO LEND CREDENCE TO PRESS INTERPRETATIONS (HE EMPHASIZED SIGNIFICANCE OF "NEW" USG POSITION ON THE CHARTER). HOWEVER, SUBSEQUENT PUBLICATION OF USUN SPOKESMAN'S COMMENTS ON USG POSITION AND PRIVATE APPROACHES BY AMBASSADOR TO RABASA SEEM TO HAVE SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT, THOUGH GOM PRESSURE FOR MOST FAVORABLE POSSIBLE USG ACTION ON CHARTER WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE UNTIL (AND IF) CHARTER COMES TO VOTE.

3. SUCCESSION POLITICS IN HIDALGO - GUBERNATORIAL OR PRESIDENTIAL?

HIDALGO IN LATE SEPT. AND OCTOBER WITNESSED THE SUCCESSFUL CHALLENGE OF A STATE GOVERNOR (MANUEL SANCHEZ VITE, EX-PRI PRESIDENT) TO THE CENTRAL APPARATUS OF THE PRI ON THE ISSUE OF

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GUBERNATORIAL SUCCESSION. GOV. SANCHEZ THREW DOWN THE GAUNTLET BY GIVING EXCELSIOR AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW IN WHICH HE OSTENSIBLY ATTACKED PRESIDENTIAL FURURISMO (PREMATURE JOCKEYING FOR POSITION) AND NAMED NUEVO LEON GOVERNOR PEDRO ZORRILLA AS ENGAGED IN SHUCH ACTIVITY IN SUPPORT OF THE "MOST VISIBLE" CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT (GOBERNACION SECRETARY MOYA PALENCIA). SANCHEZ VITE WENT ON TO DECRY FORCES WITHIN THE PRI'S POPULAR SECTOR WHO WISHED TO IMPOSE A GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE UPON THE CITIZENS OF HIDALGO, AND ARGUED THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEMOCRACY AND FEDERALISM THE NEXT GOVERNOR OF HIDALGO SHOULD BE CHOSEN WITHIN THE STATE.

- COMMENTATORS QUICKLY POINTED OUT THAT LOCAL POLITICAL BOSSES ALWAYS INVOKED THESE CONCEPTS TO JUSTIFY CONTINUISMO AND SEVERAL NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURES CHARACTERIZED THE SANCHEZ VITE STATEMENTS AS THE LAST GASP OF A WASHED UP POLITICAN. AFTER THREE

WEEKS OF INTENSE SPECULATION, DURING WHICH ONE "UNCOVERING" OF A SANCHEZ VITE ASSOCIATE WAS QUICKLY DISAVOWED, ANOTHER SANCHEZ VITE COLLEAGUE, ONTONIEL MIRANDA ANDRADE, WAS UNCOVERED AS THE PRI CANDIDATE, ALTHOUGH AS OF THIS WRITING MIRANDA STILL MUST BE

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ENDORSED BY THE CONVENTIONS OF THE PRI'S THREE SECTORS. BOTH HIDALGO SENATORS AND ONE FEDERAL DEPUTY (ALL REJECTED ASPIRANTS) HAVE CRITICIZED THE CHOICE AND THE NATIONAL PRESS HAVE LAMENTED THIS SYMPTOM OF LOCAL BOSSISM.

- THE INTERESTING QUESTION IS HOW AND WHY WAS SANCHEZ VITE ALLOWED TO SUCCEED IN THIS MANEUVER AFTER ATTACKING MOYA

PALENCIA? A LOGICAL, PARTIAL ANSWER IS -- ONLY WITH THE BACKING OF A POWERFUL PROTECTOR IN MEXICO CITY WHO PROBABLY IS A RIVAL CONTENDER FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. ONE NAME SUGGESTED (TO AN EMBOFF) WAS THAT OF SECRETARY OF PRESIDENCY CERVANTES
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DEL RIO.

4. PARM LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION - THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER AMONG THE POWERLESS

WHEN PARM (AUTHENTIC PARTY OF MEXICAN REVOLUTION) PRESIDENT GENERAL JUAN BARRAGAN DIED LAST MONTH, MANY COMMENTATORS SUGGESTED THE PARTY MIGHT USEFULLY BE INTERRED WITH HIM. HOWEVER, BARRAGAN'S PASSING PROMPTED GREAT INTEREST IN POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS -- INCLUDING ONE, GENERAL ADOLFO LEON OSARIO, WHO IS NOT EVEN A PARM MEMBER. AFTER A WEEK OF CONFLICTING REPORTS, CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS AND "LAUNCHINGS OF" CANDIDACIES BY VARIOUS ASPIRANTS, THE PARM CHOSE THE AGING GENERAL FERNANDO VAZGUEZ AVILA AS INTERIM PRESIDENT, PENDING CONVOCAION OF A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THE DATE OF WHICH IS STILL UNANNOUNCED.

HOWEVER, A PARM OFFICIAL TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP (WHICH HE PUT AT 185,000) IS "YOUNG" AND CONFIDENTLY PREDICTED THE PARTY WOULD CHOOSE A YOUNG, NEW FACE AS ITS NEXT PRESIDENT.

5. SENATORS DE PARTIDO (AT LARGE)

ON OCT 18 LITTLE KNOWN GUANAJUATO SENATOR JOSE RIVERA PEREZ CAMPOS (PRI) STARTLED THE COUNTRY BY DECLARING THAT THE SENATE WAS "OPPOSED TO AN EXCESS OF STATE INTERVENTION", WHICH "COULD LEAD OUR COUNTRY TO FORMS OF A TOTALITARIAN REGIME". HIS SURPRISED COLLEAGUES QUICKLY CLARIFIED THAT HE WAS NOT SPEAKING FOR THE SENATE; INDEED THE PUTDOWN WAS SO HARD THE PPS AND PAN JUMPED INTO THE FRAY TO CHARACTERIZE THE SENATE AS "AMORPHOUS, MORIBUND, AND "MOTHEATEN" AND TO SUGGEST THE REMEDY OF CREATING A SYSTEM OF "AT LARGE SENATORS", SIMILAR TO THAT IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. AMONG OTHERS, SENATE LEADER OLIVARES SANTANA CRITICIZED THIS IDEA, PROTESTING THAT IF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WANTED A VOICE IN THE SENATE, THEY'D HAVE TO WIN A SEAT OUTRIGHT. BUT HARDLY BEFORE THE PRINT PUTTING OLIVARES ON RECORD HAD DRIED, PRES. ECHEVERRIA, SPEAKING AT A CEREMONY HONORING DECEASED PRESIDENTS CARDENAS AND CALLES, SAID HE WOULD BE SENDING SUCH AN INITIATIVE TO THE CONGRESS. THAT OLIVARES WAS OUT OF STEP WITH PRESIDENTIAL THINKING SUGGESTS ECHEVERRIA'S DECISION WAS SPONTANEOUS, TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT CRISIS.

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6. CONGRESS VOICES OPPOSITION TO GASOLINE TAX

PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FISCAL REFORM MEASURES, AN EIGHT CENTS TAX PER LITER ON EACH OF MEXICO'S TWO BRANDS OF GASOLINE HAS PROVOKED A SURPRISING AMOUNT OF PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION. SENATE LEADER OLIVARES SANTANA DECLARED OCT 29 THAT THE TAX WAS "NOT BEING WELL RECEIVED/ BY THE PUBLIC AND ASKED THAT TREASURY SECRETARY LOPEZ PORTILLO ALSO APPEAR IN THE SENATE TO DISCUSS AND EXPLAIN THE MEASURE. IN HIS CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES APPEARANCE OCT 30 LOPEZ PORTILLO GAVE A DRAMATIC AND FORCEFUL DEFENSE OF THE GAS TAX BUT IN ALMOST PLEADING TONES THREE TIMES STATED THAT THIS WOULD BE THE LAST OF GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO DEAL WITH INFLATION. APPLAUSE BY THE PACKED CHAMBER WAS RESPECTFUL BUT RESTRAINED; IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE MEXICAN CONGRESS, PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME, WILL ALTER SIGNIFICANTLY AN EXECUTIVE BILL.

7. LAW FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY RECEIVES NATIONAL ATTENTION

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS WAS BRIEFLY THE FOCUS OF NATIONAL ATTENTION AND DEBATE WHEN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES HELD PUBLIC HEARINGS OCT 8-9 ON THE GOVERNMENT BILL REFORMING THE CONSTITUTION AND SEVEN FEDERAL LAWS TO ACHIEVE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN. IN AN UNUSUAL STEP, THE CHAMBER INVITED PROMINENT WOMEN TO TESTIFY, WHO SURPRISED THE DEPUTIES AND THE REST OF THE COUNTRY BY, INTER ALIA, DISCUSSING ABORTION, SUGGESTING THAT PART OF THE TRADITIONAL MEXICAN MARRIAGE CEREMONY URGING WIFELY OBEDIENCE BE DELETED, THAT CHILDREN BEAR THEIR MOTHERS'S NAME (SINCE MATERNITY IS UNQUESTIONABLE), AND THAT THE POSSESSIVE PRONOUN "DE" ("OF") BE DROPPED FROM MARRIED WOMEN'S NAMES. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE WOMEN'S ADVOCACY DEALT WITH CONCRETE, UN-EMOTIONABLE ISSUES, THE PUBLIC DEBATE, CENTERING ON THE MORE EXTREME POSITIONS, PRODUCED MORE HEAT THAN LIGHT, BUT SHOWED THAT MEXICO'S MACHISMO SOCIETY HAS WOMEN DETERMINED TO PARTICIPATE AS EQUALS.

8. TWO NEW STATES

ON OCTOBER 8, 1974 THE TERRITORIES OF QUINTANA ROO AND BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR BECAME STATES. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STATEHOOD
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BY MEXICO'S LAST REMAINING TERRITORIES COMPLETED THE DREAM OF A FULLY INTEGRATED MEXICO OF FREE "SOVEREIGN" STATES UNITED IN A FEDERAL SYSTEM AS ENVISAGED 150 YEARS AGO IN THE FIRST FEDERAL CONSTITUTION. ELECTIONS IN THE NEW STATES WILL BE HELD ON

NOVEMBER 10, 1974. (SEE MEXICO A-458 FOR DETAILS OF CONGRESSIONAL
AND PUBLIC DEBATE).
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